Relationship Policy – Staff and Students

Version Control

1. Full Document Number:	LSTMHRSPOL030
2. Version number:	1.0
3. Superseded version number:	N/A – New Policy
4. Document owner job title:	Head of People Services
5. Department / function:	Human Resources
6. Approved by:	
7. Date of approval:	DD-MONTH-YYYY
8. Next review date:	Annually
9. Date of Equality Impact Assessment (assessment enclosed):	2nd July 2025
10. Accessibility checked: Yes/no	Use the Accessibility Checker in the Word Toolbar, or see Accessibility guide
11. Does this policy apply to LSTM Group (LSTM and subsidiaries?) Yes / no	Yes
12. All policies will be added to the LSTM website unless an exception is provided here	If there's an exception, provide a contact email address for the LSTM website
13. If this policy has been reviewed, has this resulted in a minor or major changes?	N/A New Policy
14. Does this policy ensure that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in our supply chains or in any part of our business?	Yes

Always view the current version of the document via the Knowledge Exchange Policy Hub.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **1** of **18**

Modifications from previous version of document

Version	Date of issue	Details of modification
1.0	July 2025	New Policy

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **2** of **18**

Contents

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **3** of **18**

1.   Introduction and Context

1.1.   LSTM is committed to creating a great place to work and study, in which the principles of respect, dignity, and inclusion are part of our everyday goals and behaviours.

1.2.   LSTM acknowledges that positive professional working relationships between colleagues and students are central to the educational development and welfare of students.

1.3.   LSTM also recognises that close personal relationships may exist or develop between members of staff and/or students.

1.4.   Personal relationships between colleagues of the LSTM Group and students raise questions of conflict of interest, of trust and confidence in working relationships and of equal treatment in teaching, learning, supervision, selection, assessment, research and pastoral support.

1.5.   The purpose of this policy is to set out guidelines for personal relationships to ensure that relationships will be conducted with integrity. This policy does not prohibit staff from having a personal relationship with colleagues or students but sets out guidelines to manage conduct, conflicts of interest and protect individuals from harm or disadvantage.

1.6.   In all cases LSTM strongly discourages "intimate personal relationships" between staff and students (this does not relate to personal relationships between staff). This means either a relationship which involves one or more of the following elements:

- physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity.
- romantic or emotional intimacy
- a relationship beyond the workplace ie landlord, sub-letting accommodation or financial support

2.   Equality and Diversity

2.1   LSTM is committed to promoting equity of opportunity, combatting unlawful discrimination and promoting good community relations. We will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination or behaviour that undermines this commitment and is contrary to our Equity Diversity Inclusion policy.

2.2.   This policy required an Equity Impact Assessment, which is at the end of this document.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **4** of **18**

3.   Safeguarding

3.1   The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) believes that everyone we come into contact with, regardless of age, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation or ethnic origin has the right to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation. LSTM will not tolerate abuse and exploitation by staff or associated personnel.

3.2   LSTM recognises its role in safeguarding and protecting our staff, students, volunteers and other representatives as well as the beneficiaries, research participants, patients and communities with whom we have direct and indirect contact through our work. LSTM has a zero-tolerance policy for staff and organisational representatives committing any type of harm, exploitation, abuse or harassment.

3.3   Safeguarding principles are integral to our approach to our policies and procedures. This policy document reflects our organisational commitment to keeping children and vulnerable adults safe, including our staff and students.

4.   Scope

4.1.   This policy applies to all colleagues employed on a UK contract across the LSTM Group which includes LSTM & IVCC. For the purpose of this policy, where LSTM is referenced, this also refers to WTC and IVCC.

4.2.   This policy also applies in relation to students on higher education courses provided in any manner or form by, or on behalf of, a provider (including but not limited to circumstances where a provider is responsible only for granting awards for students registered with another provider.

4.3.   This policy does not apply to other individuals performing functions for the organisation, such as agency workers, consultants, or self-employed contractors.

4.4.   LSTM is a global employer and endeavours to write policies that apply to all its colleagues. Where local employment law or regulations require a different approach, the HR department will advise managers and colleagues.

4.5.   This policy does not form part of any colleague's contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **5** of **18**

5. Responsibilities

5.1. LSTM Executive are responsible for ensuring that LSTM is a supportive working environment that is fair and respectful for all.

5.2. It is the responsibility of colleagues and students to read, understand, and fully engage with this policy and process.

5.3. It is important that colleagues recognise that they are in a position of trust, and it is their professional and ethical responsibility not to abuse that trust through the imbalance of power and influence and to avoid perceived or actual conflicts of interest.

5.4. LSTM colleagues and students are expected to maintain boundaries between their professional and personal life, and as a relationship may have the potential to cause concern and/or disruption for other colleagues and students it is essential that they maintain appropriate conduct, always behaving discreetly in a professional and respectful manner.

5.5. It is the responsibility of the Human Resources department to provide support and guidance to managers and colleagues on the operation of this policy.

6. Personal Relationships

6.1. A **close personal relationship is** defined as intimate, personal or immediate family connection (e.g. partner, parent, child, sibling or any other close family member), a relationship where there is financial dependence, or a relationship beyond the workplace ie landlord, sub-letting accommodation or financial support

6.2. An **intimate personal relationship** involves one of more of the following elements:

- Physical intimacy including isolated or repeated sexual activity.
- Romantic or emotional intimacy.

6.3. **Inappropriate personal relationships** are defined where one party has real or perceived authority, influence or power over the other's conditions of employment or can directly impact the other's career progression (which includes formal and informal supervisory relationships) and where this real or perceived authority is unchecked or unmitigated; relationships which are undisclosed may also be considered inappropriate.

6.4. Where a close personal relationship develops or exists between colleagues or between colleagues and students, the individuals involved are required to report it in confidence, as soon as possible via the appropriate route.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **6** of **18**

6.5. The purpose of reporting is to ensure that any risks or issues which may arise because of the relationship can be assessed and mitigations or measures can be put in put in place to protect and safeguard those in the relationship and people around them. LSTM believes the following non-exhaustive list of issues which may arise where there is a personal relationship, including both detrimental and favourable treatment:

Colleagues

- Lack of transparency in relation to workplace matters.
- Risks to the confidentiality of business information.
- Legal risks regarding discrimination or harassment.
- Potential conflicts of interest of those involved in personal relationships.
- Actual or perceived bias regarding recruitment, promotion, appraisals, and other operational matters where colleagues in a personal relationship are also in a direct reporting or subordinate relationship.
- Potential for negative effect on general perception of fairness, objectivity and impartiality, for individuals or colleagues
- Embarrassment of other staff.
- Fear of favouritism.
- General adverse impact on team dynamics and reduction in team morale.
- Outputs may be disrupted in the event of a relationship breakdown.
- Not receiving a positive review or reference or receiving a negative review or reference or alternatively receiving a positive review or reference.
- Not receiving funding for research.
- Being promised access to funding and resources
- Restricting access to resources.
- Being promised introductions to others who could advance their academic or professional career.

Students

- Unfavourable treatment in academic assessments, for example, less access to support or feedback, less opportunity for extensions, lower grades or marks.
- Favourable treatment on academic assessments, for example greater access to support or feedback, more opportunity for extension, higher grades or marks.
- Inappropriate Influence over marking, assignments, exam results or outcomes.
- Fear of favouritism
- Potential for negative effect on general perception of fairness, objectivity and impartiality amongst student cohort
- Restricting participation in aspects of a student's education

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **7** of **18**

7. Relationships between colleagues

7.1. Close personal relationships can influence working and professional practices, e.g. where those involved in a relationship are in a line management position.

7.2. Whilst acknowledging that close personal relationships will exist or develop between colleagues, LSTM will take steps to support and protect individuals in the relationship and those who work with them, from any consequences and/or implications of the relationship, real or perceived; this also includes institutional risks of conflict of interest.

7.3. Colleagues who have close personal relationships (see 6.1 above) with other colleagues, have a responsibility to declare this to HR and relevant manager. This information will be handled sensitively and with discretion. The manager will work with colleagues to recognise, assess and address any actual or perceived conflicts of interest and their impact and take appropriate action to mitigate the situation.

7.4. If the colleague is in a relationship with their line manager, HR will discuss this with the appropriate Head of Department.

7.5. This may include change of line management, team or department for one of the parties, changes in approaches to decisions about pay, promotion or progression etc depending on the specifics of the situation.

7.6. Line managers will also discuss with the colleagues involved the appropriateness of informing other colleagues of the relationship.

7.7. Depending on the circumstances and complexity of the situation, a management framework may be required to oversee and monitor the mitigations and measures implemented. HR will advise on the appropriate steps in this situation.

7.8. Where a colleague is also a student at LSTM, any relevant sections of the student procedures should also be undertaken. Please refer to section 8 below.

8. Relationships between colleagues and students

8.1. Colleagues who have, or who form a close personal relationship with a student, have a responsibility to declare this to their line manager and the Academic Registrar, or other managers in the Faculty of Education, irrespective of whether the colleague has any element of responsibility for the student or not. The line managers and managers of the Faculty of Education will work with colleagues to recognise and address any actual or perceived conflicts of interest and take appropriate action to mitigate the situation.

8.2. Where the relationship is of a romantic or intimate nature, the colleague must report this as soon as possible to their line manager and the Academic Registrar in the Faculty of Education to ensure necessary measures are put in place.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **8** of **18**

8.3. In a situation where a colleague has direct academic responsibilities, or other direct professional responsibilities in relation to that student, managers in the Faculty of Education will be responsible for ensuring that the colleague is not involved in the student's assessment, supervision or any other academic, administrative or pastoral responsibilities.

8.4. Where the student is a PGR student and the colleague is a member of the student's supervisory team or Progress Assessment Panel (PAP), the colleague must inform their Head of Department and the Head of PGR or Academic Registrar in the Faculty of Education. Where possible, the colleague should be removed from the supervisory team / PAP, and an alternative supervisor / PAP member assigned. Where expertise is not identified internally an external should be considered.

8.5. Managers within the Education Faculty will also discuss with the student about informing other students/colleagues of the relationship, where appropriate, to guard against accusations or perceptions of impropriety in the future.

8.6 The requirements on personal relationships are not intended to prohibit staff from discharging their professional, pastoral or academic responsibilities within appropriate professional boundaries. For example, a staff member may necessarily have physical contact with a student as part of their academic role (eg. Modelling appropriate physiotherapy techniques) or a personal connection with a student as part of their academic or professional role (for example, as a personal tutor or as a counsellor). The definition of "intimate personal relationship" includes reference to "emotional intimacy" and this should not prevent a member of staff engaging compassionately and considerately with a student on a professional basis. This may be particularly important when engaging with students in distress.

8.6. To maintain appropriate relationships with students and to reduce the risk of sexual misconduct, abuse of power or conflict of interest, colleagues must use an LSTM email account, LSTM telephone, LSTM software and applications and internet access for communications with students where possible and avoid personal messaging.

9.   Reporting and Declaration

9.1. A close personal relationship that exists between colleagues, or between colleagues and students, must be declared as soon as possible. Either party or both can report the relationship, but in the latter scenario (i.e. a colleague and student relationship) LSTM expects that member of staff will make a report.

9.2. Failure to disclose the existence of a relationship between colleagues and students will be subject to investigation under a disciplinary procedure. Failure to disclose the existence of a close personal relationship between colleagues may be subject to disciplinary investigation, depending on the wider circumstances of the situation. No action will result from the existence of a relationship alone.

9.3. For colleagues, all reports of close personal relationships will be retained in confidence in HR, linked to the records of the individuals concerned. Information will be treated sensitively and with discretion.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **9** of **18**

9.4. For students, all reports of close personal relationships will be retained in confidence with the Academic Registry, linked to the records of the individuals concerned. Information will be treated sensitively and with discretion.

9.5. All colleagues will be required annually to review relationship declarations to ensure that they are up to date.

9.6. LSTM will review all declarations, assess the risks and take appropriate action, where necessary, which may include:

- Moving one party to another department/supervisor/line manager
- Withdrawing supervisor or person in authority or perceived authority from all matters affecting or appearing to affect the other party
- Investigation to determine if any inappropriate action occurred because of the relationship, which could result in disciplinary action.

9.7. Action will only be taken if an issue or risk is identified and not solely based on the existence of a relationship.

10. Concerns

10.1. If there are concerns that the relationship is non-consensual at any time during the relationship, colleagues and students are encouraged to discuss this with their relevant line manager or student support.

10.2. Concerns can be raised in a variety of ways at LSTM by staff and students, but also by research partners and members of the community.

10.3. The easiest way for staff and students to raise all concerns about misconduct is by reporting using LSTMs externally hosted Speak up Platform, Vault.

10.4. VAULT has an app which staff and students can access, or the system can be accessed via desktop Vault. Instructions for VAULT can be found here: https://content.vaultplatform.com/client-assets/videos/mobile-app/mobile-app.mp4.

10.5. It is possible to raise concerns on VAULT anonymously, (we can reply anonymously through the system, without knowing who we are speaking with).

10.6. Colleagues or students who witness or have concerns about inappropriate behaviour relating to others should also report their concerns via Vault.

10.7. Any allegations or reports of sexual harassment or misconduct will be investigated in accordance with LSTM's policy on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **10** of **18**

10.8. Concerns can also be raised with the Educational Safeguarding Lead, or one of the Educational Safeguarding Focal Points, (see Raising a concern section of the Student intranet) or a [Dignity & Respect Champion](). This can be via phone, in person or email.

10.9. Students can report and seek support for harassment or sexual misconduct that occurs within a relationship with a staff member, regardless of whether the relationship is permitted under this policy or not. Students will not be penalised by LSTM for participating in a relationship with a relevant staff member and will be protected from retaliation by the staff member if they report harassment or sexual misconduct.

10.10. Colleagues and students who do not wish to speak to a member of the Education department, can contact LSTM's Designated Safeguarding Lead on safeguarding@lstmed.ac.uk

Full document number: LSTMHRSPOL030
Document title: Relationship Policy – Staff & Students
Version number: 1.0   Date issued: July 2025
Page **11** of **18**

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template

(Please refer to the [EIA guidance document)](#)

Equality Impact Assessment: Section 1 (to be completed for all Policies)

Title of policy/process:	Relationship Policy
Policy owner job title:	Human Resources & Education
Date of EIA:	3rd July 2025
Policy relevant to: Staff / students / visitors etc:	Staff and Students
Summary of any consultation with stakeholders (e.g. date and type of consultation):	*Reviewed by:* *P Tubb - Safeguarding Lead* *M Stewart - Reader* *S Airey – Executive Director for Global HR*
This policy has been checked for accessibility on: (date)	*July 2025*

I confirm that this policy does/does not impact people, and therefore does not require an EIA (delete as appropriate)	**Does** impact people *(continue to Section 2)* **Does not** impact people *(you have finished the exercise, copy this table into your policy and review in line with your policy review cycle)*

Section 2: To be Completed if your policy has an impact on people, or if you are unsure of the impact of a Policy or Procedure and need to engage with stakeholders (note: you do not need to use this template – only use it if it's helpful)

Ref.	Protected Characteristic (Equality Act 2010)	Yes (positive/ negative) / no	Potential issues to consider, any data obtained	Potential actions that can be taken to mitigate against impact
1.1	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on a group depending on their *ethnicity*?	*Yes positive*		
1.2	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on a group depending on their *gender*?	*Yes positive*		
1.3	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people during *pregnancy or maternity*?	*Yes positive*		
1.4	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on *people with disabilities*?	*Yes positive*		

1.5	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to their *sexual orientation*?	*Yes-positive*		
1.6	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to their *religion, belief, or lack thereof*?	*Yes positive*		
1.7	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people who are *trans*?	*Yes positive*		
1.8	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to their *age*?	*Yes positive*		
1.9	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to *marriage or civil partnership*?	*Yes positive*		
2.0	We are committed to endeavouring to ensure that there is no modern slavery or human trafficking in our supply chains or in any part of our business.			

Ref.	Other groups who could be impacted (acquired characteristics)	Yes (positive/ negative) / no	Potential issues to consider, any data obtained	Potential actions that can be taken to mitigate against impact
2.1	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to their *contract type (part-time or full-time)?*	*Yes positive*		
2.2	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to their *contract status (fixed-term or indefinite)?*	*Yes positive*		
2.3	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on people due to *their grade?*	*Yes positive*		
2.4	Is it likely that the policy or framework **could** have a positive or negative impact on *people with dependents or caring responsibilities?*	*Yes positive*		

Ref	PREVENT Duty	Yes /no	Potential issues to consider, any data obtained	Potential actions that can be taken to mitigate against impact
2.5	PREVENT: Does this policy/proposal impact on any of the following areas of PREVENT duty: (a) staff and student welfare (b) events and external speakers (c) training in relation to PREVENT	No No No		
2.6	Is a separate risk assessment required?	Yes	Review of all declarations to identify concerns and put plans in place to mitigate risks	This will depend on the nature of the declaration

Conclusion

a. What issues are highlighted by the EIA process? Summarise the action you will take to mitigate against them, or how you've changed your policy to remove the issues.	None
b. If you consider intersectionality of protected characteristics, are the issues compounded? Summarise the action you will take to mitigate against the issues.	N/A
c. Are there are groups of people who aren't recorded so far, who may be adversely impacted by this policy/framework?	N/A
d. Are there any opportunities within the policy/framework to particularly promote equity?	N/A
e. Does the policy/framework need amendment after the outcome of the EIA process?	N/A
f. Timeline for amendment, review and further consultation with key stakeholders.	N/A
g. Any additional comments	None

Once Section 1 & 2 are completed, copy and paste into your policy template, with any confidential or restricted data (or identifying numbers of individuals [<5]) redacted, to allow for sharing of good practice across the School via the internal Policy Hub. Please ensure you refer to job roles and group names, and not individual's names.

Please share the final document with <u>inclusion@lstmed.ac.uk</u> prior to internal publication.